



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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**Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
In Support of HB 6599 An Act Concerning Discrimination**
Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Judiciary Committee, March 21, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Anna Doroghazi, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Communication for Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the statewide association of Connecticut's nine community-based rape crisis programs. Our mission is to provide high-quality, culturally competent services for victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. In furtherance of that mission, we support the passage of HB 6599, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*.

HB 6599 would amend Connecticut's existing non-discrimination statutes to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression. It would explicitly and uniformly make this kind of discrimination illegal in housing, employment, public accommodations, and credit.

A 2010 survey of transgender people in Connecticut found that a third of respondents had lost a job, almost half were denied employment, and more than one-fifth of respondents were refused medical care because of discrimination based on their gender identity or expression.¹ These numbers illustrate that without a non-discrimination law that includes gender identity or expression, we allow transgender people to be pushed to the margins of society. When communities are marginalized through discrimination, they can become targets of sexual assault and other forms of violence.

It is not possible to create a world that is free of sexual violence without addressing other forms of oppression and discrimination. By denying basic civil rights to transgender and gender non-conforming people, the state of Connecticut has created a second-class citizenry that is more susceptible to bullying, harassment, and violence. This is not acceptable. When any individual or group is pushed aside and made a target, all of us are less safe.

Ending sexual assault and other forms of violence requires a commitment to equality, and CONNSACS is pleased to demonstrate that commitment by supporting HB 6599. We hope that the Committee will take this opportunity to ensure that basic civil rights are a reality for everyone in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Grant, Mottet, and Tanis. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011.